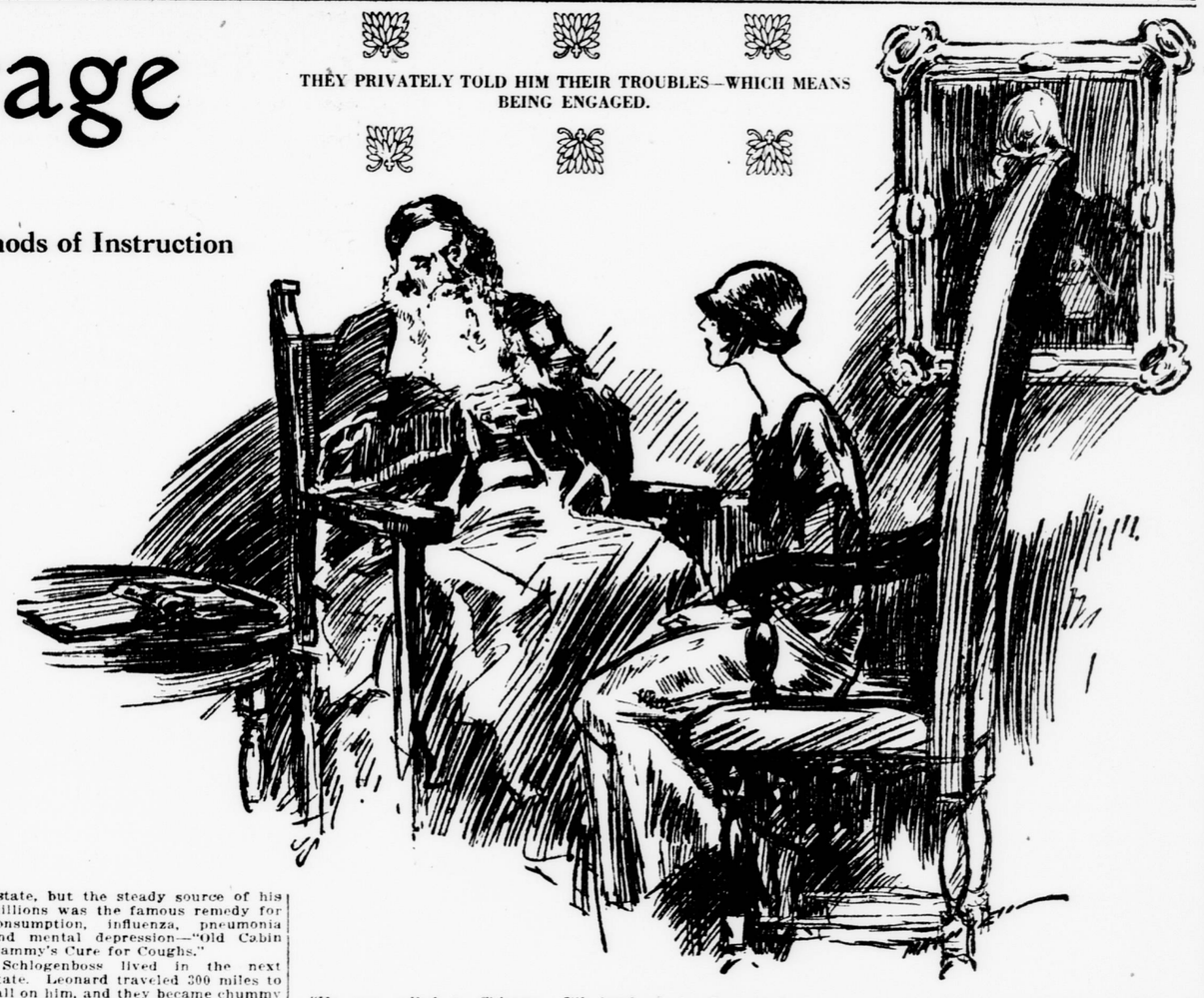
A Citizen of the Mirage

BY SINCLAIR LEWIS

Describing the Change at the University of Daily Life to Conventional Academic Methods of Instruction

THEY PRIVATELY TOLD HIM THEIR TROUBLES—WHICH MEANS BEING ENGAGED.

LEONARD LAMB SHANKLIN, Ph. D., had been instructor in chemistry in a college. He still had the academic mind, thinking of the universe as a collection of professors surrounded by darkness, but he also had the money-making mind.

At 33 Leonard Lamb Shanklin was manager of the school laboratory department of the Vigilance Chemical and Supply House, a company which made an interesting saving in the cost of raw materials by being generous to such college purchasing agents and science teachers as would listen to common sense. Not all of his business was on a basis of bribery. Even honestly earned commissions were acceptable to Leonard.

He had never been able to get even a feeler from a Midwestern college fantastically named "The University of Daily Life." Nor could he find out anything about the university, except that its president was one Basil Quaero, that it had 5,000 volumes in the library, and was situated in a town called New Ratersford.

One September he called on Melanchthon Institute, and realized that by an easy jump he could reach the town of New Ratersford and look over the University of Daily Life. He arrived at noon, found that New Ratersford was a place of 2,000 people.

The university was a mile and a half from the town. In the tranquil afternoon Leonard walked to it. He topped a hill, and looked into a tiny valley that was the campus. There were a dozen Tudor buildings, with tower and pointed arch, and leaded casements overlooking rhododendron-bordered walks. Not one person was in sight; the silken wind carried to him no sound of life.

With a shyness unnatural, he descended, walked on tiptoe among the cloistered buildings. Through the windows of a dormitory he saw pictures, fireplaces and couches on which undergraduates should have been loafing and making terrific noises. In a laboratory he noted static machines, motors, balances under glass. But no human being was visible.

"Anybody around?" Leonard cried. There wasn't even an echo. His stomach prickled with uneasiness.

The campus was immaculate, the grass-plots trim, the new ivy carefully pruned. But who had done the work?

He climbed toward what seemed to be the chapel—a detached Gothic structure on a rise. He started, stopped. The tall bronze doors were open.

But through them came no sound. He stood in the vestibule. He heard a voice—a bell voice, deep, serious, rich with ancient sorrows:

"My friends, we open our seventh year of this university, our seventh year of seeking the excellence of wisdom."

Leonard peered in. There was no one in all the chapel save the speaker, a huge old man, white-bearded, erect, standing alone by the lectern.

Leonard slipped behind a baize inner door while the old man went on:

"This is to be our year of glory—as, to the man who with seeing eyes beholds the good brown earth and the aspiring sky, every year is a new glory. But peculiarly this year shall we—we will, oh, we will——"

Then, as a great tree crashes, the old man sank to his knees. Sunlight splashed the place where he knelt, and Leonard could see that he wore a black silk cassock, rusty and darned. He held up his two mighty arms, threw back his head so that in the licking sun flame his white beard was silver fire. The triumphant voice that had filled the stone arches with soaring life was shattered to a cry for help.

"Lord of hosts, I cannot go on! I am defeated. Seven years I have waited for disciples, and not one has come to stay, not one, not one! I take Thy rebuke but—give to Thy servant one follower before I die!"

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LEONARD LAMB SHANKLIN discovered himself skittering down the chapel steps, through the campus, back toward town. When he had walked the unmanly awe out of his system, he grumbled:

"I believe I'm letting something good get by me. The old nut certainly has got one complete plant here, must be this Basil Quaero, the president. Me for you, Basil."

With which Leonard turned and marched back. From the archway of a recitation hall he watched the door of the chapel till he saw the white-bearded man emerge, walk down the hill, enter a garden-ringed stone cottage at the edge of the birch grove. The man had removed his cassock, wore a careless, old short coat and no hat. He tramped like a veteran soldier.

Leonard presently pounded on the knocker on the oak door of the cottage.

The old man opened the door. Leonard was embarrassed by his near-seen hugeness. His face was rough, but over his vast forehead and deep in his quiet eyes was the melancholy beauty of the quest of truth. He gazed absently down on the dapper Leonard.

"Is this President Quaero?"

"It is." The strange eyes widened, grew lively. "Are you a student?"

"Why not, not exactly, but—My card."

The card asserted that not only was Leonard Lamb Shanklin a doctor of philosophy—but also that he had formerly been instructor of chemistry at Littlejohn University.

Quaero's laugh came like the March blast in ringing mountain-cleft. He roared: "Welcome, by boy! I don't know what heresy they've fired you for, and you needn't tell me. Here you can teach the truth as you see it—if any students come to be taught."

Leonard snapped:

"I haven't been fired for anything! Fact is, I've, uh, temporarily abandoned the purely pedagogic aspect to assist in developing the distributive function of the commercial—"

"I see. You mean you're on the road, selling. Plain words break no images, Doctor. But come in—stay as long as you can. I am lonely, and I am garrulous!"

The old man had a shrewd eye, and his study indicated the man used to books. It had deep-hollowed chairs, and it reeked with the good smell of tobacco and old leather bindings.

A little after six Quaero said: "Stay to supper, Doctor. You suggest things to me. This problem of the use of tides for generation of power—it sets my mind off wandering and imagining, and that's the sweetest use of knowledge. Come, you'll stay!"

Leonard was astounded to find that Quaero actually intended to cook supper himself. The kitchen was a place of miracles, with electric range, electrically-timed fireless cooker, electric dishwasher. The dining table was at one end of the kitchen but set off from it by two high-backed settles with the table between—a corner for companionable talk.

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BASIL QUAERO showed an unexpected quickness and exactness of movement as his heavy fingers cracked the eggs for a mushroom omelet, and set an amethyst vase of asters on an embroidered cloth. He was boyishly proud of his electrical devices. Midway in eating of the omelet, he demanded:

"Out with it, son! You're wondering why there aren't any students here. Very well. This university is the dream of two old fools, myself and W. I. Pusey—I believe the W. I. stands for Washington Irving—you may remember Pusey's Boston department store. At one time he must have been about the most prosperous retail merchant in New England.

"When he retired, he sent for me, and told me to start this university. Since then I scarcely hear a word of him, except when he sends the annual interest—I suspect he put most of his fortune into the endowment, and is living off some place in lean retirement, hoping I'll save his soul for him. I have to guess at what Mr. Pusey wants, and try to carry it out.

"The two principles of this place were to be freedom and common sense. Pusey wanted people to be free to study anything whatever here. But as it's worked out, I find that when students or teachers come here complaining that they have not been free to follow their own brand of truth, they still object to the other fellow, following his own brand.

"Several times, these seven years, I've gathered a bunch of students who have held all, unconventional theories in the world. They all seemed to be fond of me, though I'm an orthodox, capitalistic old pedagogue, but they never could stand one another, and they quarreled and parted.

"Still, I suppose the greatest reason why no student will stay here is because we don't confer degrees. A man is welcome to come and spend one month loafing and reading French poetry, or he can grind over Assyrian inscriptions for nineteen years, but in neither case will we give him a label, like Bachelor of Arts or Doctor of Philosophy."

"B-b-but what good would it do a man to study if he didn't get a degree?" wailed the Doctor of Philosophy.

"What degree does a mechanic get for ten years of hard reading in a public library? What degree did Will Shakespeare get for writing 'Romeo'? What degree did Socrates confer on Plato?"

Leonard turned from resentment to horror as Quaero outlined the other eccentricities of his collegiate madhouse. There were to be no sane, regular courses. Quaero declared himself willing to secure teachers for anything that silly dabblers might find interesting. He was willing to have on the faculty persons who weren't even college graduates.

Craziest of all, he didn't believe in intercollegiate athletics, which Leonard knew to be the best advertisement for any college. Quaero pretended that he could not understand why 70,000 people should watch 22 men play foot ball. What he wanted to see, he said, was 22 people watching 70,000 play.

He wound up by declaring that examinations are futile, because any idler can cram for an examination and any wise man be flustered by the pompousness of an examiner into forgetting his wisdom.

Leonard wanted to say something epigrammatic and nasty, and tramp back to his hotel. Quaero rumbled:

"Well, doctor, that's enough. Forgive an old man's second childhood and stay here tonight. At least, I'll give you a bed that isn't heretical."

He did. The bed was a four-poster, the sheets fresh and smooth, and on the bedside table was a light, a clock, and a volume of "Alice in Wonderland." Leonard had a tiled bathroom of his own, with a glass-inclosed shower. He washed away the soilure of silly speculation and slept contentedly.

He awoke to ambitious energy. He looked at the clock. It was only 6. He wondered what had awakened him so early. He was conscious of the sound of a lawn mower. He slipped to the window. Steadily pushing the mower across the grass of the nearest quadrangle was President Basil Quaero in overalls and an old straw hat.

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WHEN Leonard emerged at 8 President Quaero was in his study in a silk dressing gown, reading a translation of the "Mahabharata." He trumpeted, "Hungry, my boy?" and attended to the making of scientifically crisp waffles, his massy hands hovering over the electric range.

"I want to be very abrupt and perhaps shocking," Leonard said at the pleasant moment of the second cup of coffee. "I want to do certain things for you and the university. I could promise you a thousand students here in five years."

Basil Quaero gaped at Leonard. He implored:

"How could you do it?"

Leonard rattled: "By interesting the better class of people. I could do it if I had two things—the secretaryship of the university and a promise that we should grant the usual degrees and institute regular academic courses, keeping the freak—well, the too unusual—subjects in the background—just temporarily, you understand——"

Basil Quaero's fist banged the table. His great voice tolled:

"Am I a child that I must be lied to? People are to be attracted to a place of freedom by removing the alarming feature of freedom. You want to tell me tactfully that I'm not practical. But I know it already. I'm a citizen of a mirage. I live in a future that may never come. But you—see here, young man, what do you expect to get out of this for yourself? What pay?"

"Oh, those sordid details——"

"Don't lie!"

Leonard snarled: "Well, then, what annual interest do you get from Pusey's endowment?"

"About $100,000."

"All right. I'll put this place on the map for 3 per cent of the present and all future endowments, and I'll see to it that we do get future ones! You can't appreciate the chance I'm taking. I'm now getting $6,000 a year!"

"Really? Now, doctor, I believe you salesmen have a phrase about 'selling the idea.' Go on! Sell your idea to me! I'm the ultimate consumer, and I'm full of levity and waffles."

At the end of Leonard's argument, Quaero chuckled: "You're a good jobber, Doctor. You inspire us local dealers. Some day I may give you a good order."

"Pardon me. I don't seem to understand," Leonard said stiffly.

Quaero's eyes were grim. "You ought to. I've called you a capable salesman. That's honest praise, isn't it? Now let's forget our troubles, and go see my chickens." The grimness turned to wistfulness. "I would like to have students. Yes. Not die a failure. Only, come, let's go out in the sunshine, and I'll stroll into town with you."

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THE moment Leonard had returned to the home office of the Vigilance Chemical House he procured a private stenographer for evening work, and began to make out schedules of the things he could do with the University of Daily Life. He sent these to President Quaero at the rate of one a week. Each fortnight he saw to it that some educational magnate wrote to Quaero recommending him as a person of learning and touchingly beautiful character.

Quaero answered sometimes after this fashion:

It was in March that Leonard pressed in plastic typewriting, are not more wonderful than my old-fashioned desire to be a Socrates—with disciples in peg-top pants and these new overcoats with dainty belts? I am raising buff Orpington chickens. They are very nice. I am, sir,

"Yr. obed'nt serv't.
"Basil Quaero."

It was in March that Leonard had a telegram from Quaero, saying only: "Am ill, come see me."

He found the old man in bed, attended by a female grenadier. Quaero beamed on Leonard.

"Nothing serious, my boy. Touch of jaundice. Apparently I must compromise. The average undergraduate doesn't care to live in my mirage. Go ahead. Take the shop. I planned to make it a magic shop, to sell moonlight and the key to fairyland, but no one comes to the mushroom ring any more. So you may turn the shop into a drygoods store. But do try to carry fast dyes."

Leonard patted Quaero's pillows, and got him to sign a little paper saying that in case of Quaero's death, absence or serious illness, Leonard was to be in charge of the property and policies of the university.

He knew that legally Quaero was trustee of the university funds and that he had a charter from the State legislature empowering the university to grant degrees. But he had not known that W. I. Pusey still retained personal possession of the endowment fund, and gave the interest of it yearly.

Even in the endurable event of Quaero's death, then Leonard would have to please Pusey. But that didn't worry him. Pusey and he were both practical men, both great salesmen. Besides! The letters he was going to write to Pusey! He started them that day, with a masterfully modest note in which he announced that he had been permitted to crawl under the same sod above which Basil Quaero snored.

Quaero approved of Leonard's writing to Pusey, but the only address he could give was in care of Dolson & Door, Pusey's Boston lawyers. It was Mr. Dolson who answered. He called Leonard "Esqre," and said that Mr. Pusey desired him to "express gratification for your communication of the 11th inst."

Chaste advertisements on the front pages of all magazines announced that the University of Daily Life was prepared to give the degrees of B. A., M. A., and B. S. Leonard filled out a complete teaching staff. And the subjects which he planned for the coming year were curiously similar to those of most small colleges. Quaero interfered by engaging teachers in grocery store keeping, matrimony and other incredible subjects, but Leonard so arranged the catalogue that they were made to sound almost decent, and so timed the hours of the classes that they would conflict with all the popular courses.

One subject Quaero persistently refused to admit, till it should be demanded by the students. That was Greek. He boisterously insisted that it would be better to take up Yiddish.

Leonard knew that the first students would come from near-by territory. He whispered about that there wasn't going to be any more crazy nonsense at the university; that parents could not only save railroad fare, but be assured of A1, high-class educations for their buds, right here near home. Leonard spoke to every women's club within 20 miles and the nicest people in the county became his unpaid agents.

To inquirers he sent out a handsome new catalogue. He received letters from freshmen, sophomores and juniors in small adjacent colleges which lacked the magnificent equipment of the University of Daily Life.

Forty miles away was a city of over a hundred thousand. Leonard ran up there, was dignified but cordial to managing editors of newspapers. He hinted that the story of W. I. Pusey's millions and Basil Quaero's beard would make a "dandy human interest story." But he received the local correspondents when they came, and they wrote less about the beard than about the wonderful future of the university.

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BASIL QUAERO seemed content to sit reading books and watching Leonard buzz. Without comment he let Leonard make promises, start enterprises, engage assistants. After a few hints from Leonard, Quaero gave him power of attorney to sign checks against the endowment fund.

But Quaero awakened when, on the 22d of September, 300 students matriculated for the first real year of the university. In a new cassock President Quaero stood before his first students. But he was not eloquent. He merely stretched out his arms and faltered:

"May God give you swift feet and pure hearts and golden tongues! I am not your president; I am your servant; and I am not worthy even to be your servant, for of such as you is the kingdom of heaven."

He sat down, trembling. It was Secretary Leonard Lamb Shanklin, Ph. D., who finished the ceremony, and had the students laughing by his jolliness. Now they would gratify dear old Prexy Quaero by giving the college yell. All together now:

Daily Life! Daily Life!
Free of care! Free of strife!
Yip-te-doode—yip-te-doodle,
Well, well well!
Dear old Alma Mater—
U. D. L!

Gradual were the changes that Leonard produced that first year and very tactful. In looking over Beidelman College and Musical Seminary he had met a junior who was equally efficient at sitting in on a round of roodles, and in presiding at the Y. M. C. A. Joseph Bellings, this youth was called, and he came to the University of Daily Life as a senior, and Leonard's assistant. Leonard sent him out among the undergraduates—and a week later the undergraduates petitioned President Quaero to add Greek to the curriculum. Quaero sighed, and gave in.

Their next demand was for intercollegiate athletics. Quaero called a mass meeting. The students listened to him when he presented his plan for scores of interclass teams, so that every man might taste the struggle, if he wished. But they had their way—and the next day the coach whom Leonard had already engaged came out of hiding. Though it was mid-October, on Thanksgiving day the university whipped Beidelman College 22 to 0, with the result that 90 high school seniors sent for catalogues.

In January it appeared that by being deprived of chapters of the national fraternities the students were losing all touch with the highest modern thought; also that by failing to be tested by written examinations, they were missing the chance to review their accumulated wisdom. Quaero sighed again—and instantly the university was filled with examinations and inter-collegiate fraternities.

Leonard's task as courageous young reformer was made the more difficult by the absurd love the students had for Quaero. They crowded his "lectures"—rambling gossip about a vague thing he called "being human." They privately came to tell him their troubles—which, in a coeducational college means being engaged.

It was not till the second year of Leonard's reign that he saw a way to use diplomacy upon such courses as shoe cobbling, scenery painting and repair of motor cars for amateur drivers.

Joseph Bellings had remained as fellow in the science department, and assistant to Leonard. Bellings was as jolly and intimate with freshmen as with seniors. He hinted that through he, like all the others, respected the kindly majesty of President Quaero, wasn't it a shame the poor dear old Alma Mater should be ridiculed by other colleges because of its fad courses? The students listened and quietly boycotted all subjects not on the safe-and-sane list.

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QUAERO watched the dwindling classes. He retained the instructors even when they had no one to teach. But mostly they went back to the shop, where they belonged.

But even boycott nearly failed in the celebrated case of Dr. Henry Drury, the instructor in history.

Dr. Drury began to look up local county history, and he talked about the ancestors of some of the best families. His sensational utterances were misquoted in the press of the city 40 miles away. Leonard went hotly to Quaero and demanded: "This Drury person has got to go. He shows bad taste!"

The president mused above his pipe, and answered meekly:

"Yes, genius frequently begins with bad taste. I understand the things Harry Drury says are true." That was all.

Leonard saw Bellings. The next class of Dr. Drury was attended only by four co-eds. Even they didn't come to the class after that. Drury packed his trunk and left the university forever.

Quaero called a meeting of all students, and for the first time he faced them with embarrassing wrath. He climbed into what Leonard felt was rather ridiculous rhetoric. He shouted and tramped and banged his fist.

The students, being young, looked frightened, but Secretary Leonard Lamb Shanklin, sitting back of the old roaring bear, didn't waste his time following skyey words. He was engaged in computing his personal 3 per cent on the new endowments.

For he had kept his promise to Quaero by adding other gifts to the tuition fees and the annual $100,000 from W. I. Pusey.

Though he was willing to let even the humblest shirt-sleeve millionaire have a college building named after him, Leonard yet retained his idea of getting a larger endowment out of W. I. Pusey.

Without Quaero's knowledge, Leonard wrote a friendly series of letters to Pusey, by way of his lawyers. Leonard depicted his filial affection for Quaero, but hinted that business men like himself and Pusey knew that dear old Prexy wasn't practical, and failed to understand how much money a modern knowledge plant required. He (Secretary Dr. Shankin) would be pleased to receive from the master-merchant mind of Mr. W. I. Pusey any suggestions about raising new funds. Had Mr. Pusey any friends whom he cared to approach?

Leonard didn't say anything about his receiving 3 per cent of all endowments.

After a discourteous wait, Pusey answered. The letter was forwarded by his lawyers. It said:

"You seem to be a smart fellow. Therefore, take the hint & let me alone. I've handed over all the good, hard-earned cash to your school that I intend to. I like Quaero, glad to back him, but probably the man is a crank. &, anyway, where do you horn in? Now that you've done so, kindly send me your frank opinion of Quaero. It will be confidential.

"Yours,
"W. I. PUSEY."

Leonard copied his answer on his personal typewriter seven times before he let it go, and even then he made delicate marginal changes.

He wrote that Quaero had the virtues of Mark Twain, Phillips Brooks, Erasmus and John Brown, but for that very reason could not understand that running a college was a business and consisted in getting the best of the tricky student customers. He included select remarks on his own skill in administration and his lifelong admiration of W. I. Pusey as a "constructive merchandiser."

For days he sat waiting for an answer, but received none.

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IN the third year, when there were 800 students, Leonard had the idea of getting even with W. I. Pusey by making somebody else chief patron of the university. Leonard thought of the great Theodore Schlogenboss as the new benefactor.

Mr. Schlogenboss speculated in real estate, but the steady source of his millions was the famous remedy for consumption, influenza, pneumonia and mental depression—"Old Cabin Mammy's Cure for Coughs."

Schlogenboss lived in the next State. Leonard traveled 300 miles to call on him, and they became chummy after Leonard had given, gratis, a suggestion for saving cost on the raw materials of the cure. Leonard was a good chemist. His suggestion stood the investigation of the factory laboratory.

Leonard knew that the only way to handle Schlogenboss was to be brutal.

"Look here, old sport," he said, "you know how these society bugs here think they're so darn superior just because you haven't much book learning. It would be a good joke on them if you had a big college building named after you and you were made an honorary doctor of laws!"

Schlogenboss grunted: "You're a good con-man, Doc. Sure, I could buy me a college. But no single buildings. Tell you what I'll do. I'll look over your knowledge-mill, and I'll think about giving it four million dollars—providing the whole works is named after me, Schlogenboss University—that's what I want, and my son is to get a degree."

He ain't real bright, some ways."

"Ungh!" gasped Leonard.

Schlogenboss would not yield. Leonard's fluttering pleas broke against the solid wall of four million dollars.

Three per cent of four million is one hundred and twenty thousand.

Leonard appointed the day following for Schlogenboss' visit. He uncomfortably promised that President Quaero should show Schlogenboss about. "Because," said the creator of Cabin Mammy, "I figure out from the way you knock Quaero that he must be honest. I've heard your song and dance, and I'd like to get his slant on it. Tell this Quaero fellow to meet me at the depot, afternoon train tomorrow."

Leonard went from the train directly to Quaero's study, though it was ten-thirty of the evening. The housekeeper, whom he had insisted on Quaero's engaging, admitted him with reverence. But Quaero, huge, brooding, smoke-fogged, merely turned his head and nodded.

"Good—good evening—pleasant evening—my, what a handsome volume that book on jades is! Say, Mr. Quaero, uh, the fact is—could you meet Theodore Schlogenboss tomorrow, the big manufacturer? He wants to see the university," Leonard blurted.

"I have heard of him! Why does he want to see this place?"

"H-he would endow the university, if we named it after him!"

"Oh! Just that? Is that all he asks?" Quaero was mild.

"Yes!" Leonard tentatively took a chair and drummed on his hat.

Quaero mused: "Just change the name of the university. That would make your work complete. One by one you have wiped out every feature that gave this school its reason for existing. I am too tired to fight for my dreams. And they are sacred to me. If men cannot understand them—but, Doctor, I didn't suppose we needed an extra endowment. I thought old Pusey was pretty generous to me."

"Honest, Chief, I don't want to knock Pusey, but I know that he's been holding out on us. If we can make a hit with Schlogenboss, we can be independent of Pusey, and you always say you think such a lot of independence and all that——"

"Perhaps. I feel tonight that I can never know practical affairs. Go now, my boy"—very gently—"and come to me in the morning, but not before 10."

At 8 in the morning Leonard was disturbed by the president's housekeeper, wailing: "The president! He's gone! He never slept in his bed at all last night!"

Leonard learned from the night agent that President Quaero had taken the midnight train for Chicago. But Leonard grumbled to himself all through breakfast: "Now, what does the old fool want in Chicago? Suppose Quaero went to New England, to tattle to Pusey! Quaero wouldn't dare! But if he did——"

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THOUGH the season was May, it was hot and airless. And there was no pullman on the train by which Theodore Schlogenboss arrived at New Ratersford. He clumped out of the day-coach, glaring.

Leonard fluttered up to him and cooed: "I have a taxi ready for you, Chief!"

"Huh! Horrible journey! Filthy cars! Now where's that Quaero person? Huh?"

"He was called to Chicago. I'll show you about."

"I told you I wanted the president! Wasn't he here when you got back?"

"Yes. That is——"

"You told him Theodore Schlogenboss wanted to see him?"

"Yes, but——"

The manufacturer looked Leonard all over, and stormed:

"I been thinking what an easy mark I'd be to let you get your hooks on my money. Now I'm sure about it. So your president is ashamed to meet me! Tell him I admire his nerve! But you, you feeble-minded rabbit——"

Schlogenboss stalked to a station jitney and ordered:

"Drive me to Niemen Junction. Want to catch the train back East."

Before Leonard could reach it the car was gone.

Basil Quaero was missing for months. Inquiry in Chicago disclosed only that he had taken a ticket for California.

Leonard was delighted. He had in his safe deposit box the document by which he was made attorney for Quaero in case of death, illness or absence.

He was astonished to find how much the student body loved the president. He saw girls crying, saw crepe everywhere and flags at half-mast. A mass meeting, led by the matter-of-fact captain of the foot ball team, voted $2,000 to further the search for Quaero. It was Leonard's own aide-de-camp, Joseph Bellings, who brought the money to him.

Leonard guffawed.

"So we're to spend this on detectives, are we? Well, we'll pick out a citron!"

The treacherous Bellings put his hands in his pockets, strolled up with a sneer, and remarked:

"We'll get the best detective in the country, and if any more money is needed you'll furnish it personally! Mr. Quaero was a saint. When my kid brother went wrong, Prexy sneaked out, got hold of him, walked five miles with him. I don't know what he said, but ever since that day the kid has gone straight. Unless we find Mr. Quaero, I'll tell all I know—and God help both you and me if I do!"

Then reporters came.

The Associated Press carried the story. The Sunday papers had pictures of Quaero, with speculations as to whether he had been murdered or had lost his memory. Leonard had to furnish the material, to look mournful. But the real anguish was in the letter from W. I. Pusey which arrived in mid-July. Leonard had carefully forgotten to inform Pusey of Quaero's irritating trick.

"I do not read the papers much, so have just learned that Quaero has left you. I do not blame him. You must be a good deal of a mosquito. It has been my annual custom to renew endowment each year at this time, but this year have decided to give the money to an insane asylum. More I know of sane men like you, the better I like the insane. Elect yourself president of the university. I shall not bother you again till you try to sell the buildings or something, at which time you will hear from my attorneys.

"W. I. PUSEY."

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THEN did Leonard cause an astounded detective to be abruptly discharged from his delightful task of loafing through California. A detective who looked like a stupid clerk and who had a habit of catching criminals took the job. Leonard had to discover Quaero now.

Desperately he wrote to Pusey his true opinion of Quaero. Leonard had always, he declared, loyally tried to cover up the man's ignorance and meanness. Quaero was an old charlatan, with whiskers instead of brains. He had neither knowledge nor honor. He had, for example, discharged Leonard's friend, the distinguished scholar, Dr. Henry Drury, for telling the truth!

Pusey answered only:

"You may be perfectly right about Quaero. I do not care to discuss it. I simply do not see why you should have my good money for your private school."

Leonard telegraphed to his detective:

"Use city police through California. will add $1,000 reward."

It was in early September that the detective discovered that Basil Quaero was living alone in a shack at the head of the Canyon Doloro, in the San Francisco Mountains.

Four days later Leonard was riding up that canyon. Darkness came on him and all night he crouched sleepless, and thought about rattlesnakes. He was up and riding at first milky dawn. At sunrise he saw a shack standing above him on a shelf of rock.

He left his horse and climbed softly, on foot.

The shack was of redwood, like a rough chest of cedar. Across it hung a signboard lettered in clumsy capitals: "The University of Daily Life."

Leonard heard a vast voice crying, "My children!" He looked up. On a pinnacle of rock beside the trail stood Basil Quaero, his arms outstretched toward the sea. The red sun flamed on his white beard. He was in shabby corduroy trousers and laced boots, but round his shoulders was what was left of the ragged cassock in which Leonard had first seen him.

He was thundering: "My children, we open our eleventh year of this university, our eleventh year of seeking the excellence of wisdom.

Then he broke into prayer: "Lord God, I have lost the fight; I have not kept the Faith. Sloth and ease beset me in idleness I let age steal upon me. But here, in the splendor of Thy hills, I will find strength again, and fight on to the end. And if Thou wilt send me one student—just one——"

Then he saw Leonard. He gazed down as calmly as an old war-horse at graze. Then he briskly climbed down from his rock pulpit, nodded to Leonard, and boomed: "Had your breakfast?"

"No sir!" Leonard said nothing more till he had restored courage to his trembling stomach by wolfing six large wheat cakes. Then he yearned:

"I beg you to come back to us. Hereafter you shall have your way."

"No, Doctor, no. Go back to Schlogenboss University. I belong here, at the University of Daily Life."

"B-but—I decided to kick Schlogenboss out. We're going to keep the glorious old name. Oh, Mr. Quaero, you'll never get any students, way up here."

"Doubtless I shan't. But it's pleasant to be a hermit."

"But we need you, we need you! In fact, sir—truth is, Pusey, the old pirate, won't renew the endowment unless you come back."

"Really? Why don't you talk up strong to him? You're not afraid of Pusey?"

"I am not! I've already told him just what I thought of him. Didn't mince matters. I'd go see him, if the old sneak would give me his address. Listen, Mr. Quaero! You write Pusey a letter, and tell him you're just here on a vacation—tell him you keep up your interest in the New Ratersford plant. That will bring him around."

"No, Doctor, no. I don't believe a letter from a mirage-dweller like Basil Quaero would have much effect on an old sneak like W. I. Pusey. You see, Doctor, I've carried this crazy name of Quaero for only about twelve years. Till I retired from business, I was W. I. Pusey. In fact, my lawyers still forward some amusing letters addressed to me as Pusey, and I try answer 'em, in my simple way. Let's see. Are you going to walk down the canyon, Doctor, or have you a horse?"

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The Shortest Way Home

BY J. A. WALDRON.

"JOHN," said Mrs. Paine to her husband, "I've asked Jack Wentworth to stay at least another week, and he demurs. Says he doesn't want to wear his welcome out. I wish you'd insist upon his remaining!"

"That would suit me all right," was Paine's reply. "I'd like to have him here for a long time yet. But do you remember that you demurred to his coming at all when I invited him?"

"I had a reason. I didn't fully explain it to you, but——"

"Oh, I knew your reason!"

"You did? Well, we shall not go into that now. I knew your reason for wanting him here."

"Well, I'll go into that. His golf has always been fascinating to me. He had always beaten me on club links. I thought I knew my own course well enough to get even here, but he's just the same golf wonder everywhere. Pitty he never enters competitions for championships. He would top 'em all. And I still want to improve my game. Of course I'll ask him to stay. But if I do you must tell me why you've changed your mind as to him."

"He's the most charming man we've ever had as a guest!"

"Good looking—yes. And a corking golfer."

"Golf again! You see nothing else. Don't you know that Jack is thrillingly vivacious, witty, expert in a dozen things? He knows so much about matters we are—or should be—interested in. Art, music, the theater, books and all that!"

"But he has so little money! That, in brief, was the objection you made when I invited him. And I saw through it to your real objection—Isabel. You were afraid she might fall in love with him."

"I confess it. But I see it was a baseless fear. Jack is 35 and set in bachelorhood. Isabel insists more and more upon a career as a writer. She persists that men interest her only as 'types,' and that she will never marry. I have watched her and Jack closely. They quarrel over books and authors, she beats him at tennis, they do not agree upon the function of the theater and they are actually discordant as to music. No two young persons—if you can call Jack young—could be more uncongenial, although they are polite to each other with all their differences. I want Jack here for his social utility and for entertainment."

"You're like all other women in your set. Jack as a guest would be desirable to all of them—if he had money. But where they have marriageable daughters they watch him as a cat would watch a mouse."

"Why not? So would I if there should be any danger as to Isabel. And you! Why, you'd never think of that if you could learn a point in golf! What creatures men are!"

"No worse than women who would keep Jack around—with reservations."

Paine turned on his heel with a cynical smile, and Mrs. Paine's nose was in the air as she walked away. She came upon Jack and Isabel, who had been exploring a forest upon the estate. Apparently they had been quarreling politely, for his face was red and she wore a pout as they walked in silence. Paine caught sight of Jack and bore him off to the golf course.

Far away from the Paine place a mountain loomed, and Mrs. Paine for days had talked about a picnic party to explore the height. Since her first [illegible] she had been possessed with a mania for mountain climbing at home. She determined that this journey should be taken the next day. Maj. Davison, also a guest, and Jack and Isabel were invited to go with her. Refreshments were packed in a motor, and the next morning they started.

The roads were so bad that they found they could not reach the mountain that day. They were miles from home, in a wooded region strange to all of them. They started to return before nightfall. At a point where three pathlike roads met, Albert the chauffeur was puzzled as to the way. He involved the machine in his confusion, and it broke down hopelessly.

Jack and Isabel had discussed many things on the journey, agreeing upon none, and at the moment were not speaking to each other. Mrs. Paine verged upon hysterics when it was found that they were stalled.

"Jack," said Maj. Davison, "one or both of us must set out for help. We can't stay here all night. It may be possible to dig up a machine somewhere."

Jack's descent from the motor seemed impulsive. "Why shouldn't we explore these two different roads—you and I?" he asked, indicating the two unknown ways.

"Albert can go along one. I'll match you to see whether you or I take the other. One of us should remain with the ladies," suggested the major.

"All right," said Jack, resignedly.

The major was a sport, but he lost. "I shall go with the major," said Mrs. Paine, in a determined tone. The antagonistic attitudes of Jack and Isabel had reassured her again. And she and the major took one of the roads together, while Albert started to explore the other.

Jack lighted a cigarette, and, leaning against the machine, asked, "Are you afraid of the night?"

"Not in the least," replied Isabel. Light from the full moon filtered through the trees, and an owl set up a cry.

An hour later the major and Mrs. Paine reappeared in a flivver. Jack and Isabel were not in sight. The motor horns were sounded repeatedly, but Albert alone responded. His quest had been in vain.

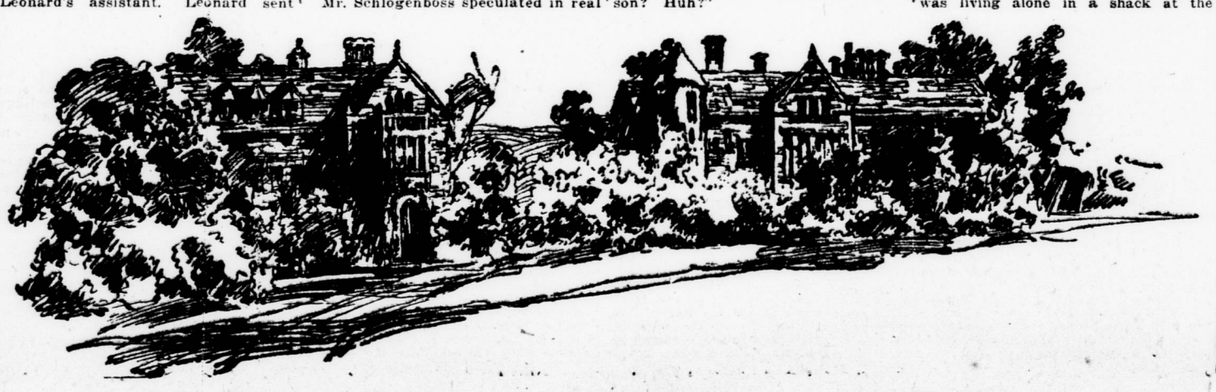
A fruitless search had been made for Jack and Isabel—though there had been no publicity—when three days later they were driven up to the Paine place by a farmer-looking person. Mrs. Paine received them with restrained excitement. Paine was on the golf links.

"This gentleman," said Jack, presenting the farmer-like person, "has been very kind to us. He found us in the forest after you had gone and took us to his home, but his work would not permit him to bring us back until today, and the place was remote from transportation."

Mrs. Paine looked coldly at the man. "Your kindness is appreciated," she said. "I would reward you now—but I don't yet know your name, sir."

"I'm the Rev. Josiah Penfield, pastor of the Church of the Brethren," he said. "I never set a price on hospitality, and the fee this young man gave me was the biggest I ever got for a marriage."

(Copyright, 1924.)



He Was It.

Intelligent Young Son to Father—Father, do you know that a device for eliminating sleep has been invented?"

Father—Yes, son, we used to have one in our home when you were a baby.